

INTEGRATING EARTH SCIENCE**● Uses of Pumice**

Pumice—a light, porous material that is formed in volcanic eruptions—is scattered all over Earth in small pieces. Because pumice floats on water, it is often carried far from the site of a volcanic eruption. Sometimes pumice drifts as far as 6,400 km (4,000 miles). Eventually, it becomes waterlogged and sinks to the bottom of the ocean. As a result, the ocean floor is covered with small pieces of pumice.

Larger amounts of pumice are found in Italy, Turkey, Greece, Spain, Canada, and parts of the United States, especially the Rocky Mountain and Pacific Coast states. In many of these locations, pumice is mined to be sold for a variety of uses.

Pumice's abrasive nature makes it a useful ingredient in soaps, cleansers, and dental products. Many polishing and scouring products also contain pumice. Also, manufacturers use pumice to polish and grind television glass. And the construction industry uses pumice in concrete, insulation, acoustic tile, stucco, and plaster.

Many sculptors take advantage of the abrasive nature of pumice. Pumice, along with sandstone, emery, and other abrasives, is used to carve stone. Because pumice is a gentle abrasive, it is used also in the sculpting of ivory.

Your Turn to Think

1. Explain why pieces of pumice can sometimes be found very far from the volcanic eruptions which formed them.
2. Where are most pumice mines in the United States found?
3. What are some uses of mined pumice?
4. What property of pumice makes it useful in soaps, cleansers, and polishers?